

For immediate release
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Teachers trained on new materials and innovative use of technology

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About 550 primary 1 and 2 teachers from 90 schools have been taught to use new instructional materials for Kinyarwanda, English, and math. Designed to help teachers use proven teaching techniques, the print and audio materials were developed by the Rwanda Education Board (REB) and the USAID-funded Literacy, Language, and Learning (L3) Initiative. Two-day trainings were held in Kigali and in each province from March 6-11.

During the trainings, teachers learned how to use the beautifully illustrated story collections, student readers, teachers' guides, and interactive audio instruction programs to effectively develop key literacy and numeracy skills.

"These materials are based on the latest research on how children learn," says Dr. Joyce Musabe, head of REB's curriculum department.

Teachers learned how the program differs from their current teaching. Key reading skills—such as awareness of the individual sounds in words and the ability to match sounds to letters—are emphasized in the materials. English audio programs allow teachers and students to regularly listen to clear pronunciation and fluent speakers. Math materials ensure that, rather than simply learning to apply memorized rules and procedures, children are able to gain key problem solving skills and to think mathematically.

Teachers expressed their confidence that the new instructional materials and techniques will support quality teaching. "After this training, I will go to our school and teach very well," said Gasanze Primary School teacher Alice Akimanizanye.

Teachers also learned how to use ordinary Nokia phones and small, portable speakers to broadcast interactive audio instruction lessons in their classrooms. The programs guide teachers and students through fun, engaging lessons using songs, games, chants, and poems. An "audio teacher" models activities with "audio children, giving instructions to the teacher in the classroom.

"These programs ensure that children across the country are equally benefiting from quality learning experiences and also allow teachers to learn and to be supported in using new teaching methodologies while they are teaching," says Agnes Mukagatete, L3 math materials developer.

Teachers remarked that their students will be happy to use the audio programs in class. Diogene Nsengimana, a teacher from GS Bumbogo, commented, "Because most of our learners like music. There is music, there is [role-playing], they will enjoy."

These materials are experimental; the teachers from the 90 schools will give feedback to finalize them, and student testing will determine whether the materials are positively impacting student learning. If they are, the materials will be distributed to all public schools across the country starting in 2014.

Funded by USAID, the L3 Initiative is implemented by Education Development Center in partnership with REB and with assistance from Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO), Concern Worldwide, International Education Exchange, and the Peace Corps.

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